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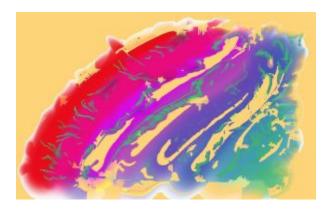
University of Arizona president emeritus Henry Koffler, 91, has launched an art career

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H**enry Koffler** has been a scientist, a professor, and president of the University of Arizona.

He has had a full life and, at 91, no one would blame him for slowing down.

But that would not be Koffler.

In fact, he is starting over — this time, as an artist.

A show of Koffler's abstracts, created on an iPad, recently opened at the UA Tech Park as part of the facility's 20th anniversary celebration.

A lifelong lover of art, Koffler, who retired from the UA in 1991, never expected to create it.

But a little more than a year ago, when he was convalescing after a long hospital stay, a neighbor suggested he use his iPad to make the art he loved so much.

He did. And he was hooked.

"It was satisfying and addictive," Koffler says as he sits in his office at the UA Alumni Building. The office isn't as spacious as his one in the school's administration building, but he has made it his own. On one wall is a massive **Nancy Tokar Miller** painting that practically hums with its soft pastels and abstract images. On another is a more realistic piece by Fritz Scholder.

Often, he puts on suit and tie, goes into the office and sits at the expansive and tidy desk, plops on his earphones to listen to the Berlin Philharmonic, and picks up his palette and paint brushes — the Sketchbook Pro program on his iPad.

" I carry my studio and I don't have to pay rent," Koffler says, ticking off the reasons he loves the iPad.

"It has amazing diversity. You can control the size of the brushes. Shapes can change. I

use the eraser as a sculpting knife. There's a very good choice of colors. I don't have to clean up a studio. It gives you spontaneity and speed."

Early on in his career, Koffler did research on the physiology and molecular biology of microorganisms.

Science is geared toward understanding; art isn't that much different, he says.

"But it touches you in a different way," says Koffler. "It allows you to apply emotionality, but it is nevertheless the truth. Science and art just have different applications."

Color is incorporated into almost every piece he does. There are bold reds, soft pinks and greens, and striking blues.

"I don't want to brag, but I have always been good with colors," says Koffler. "I'm drawn to colors. Black and white is very stunning, but it's not my favorite."

Koffler, who lists Jackson Pollock and Helen Frankenthaler among his influences, pulls out his iPad and taps the screen. An image pops up, then another and another.

"This is pretty colorful," he says as he points to one rich with pastels. On another, a dainty flower, he taps the screen a few more times and a black background turns to blue.

"I start with a blank screen and end up with this," he says, pointing to the image. "What you can do is amazing, full of possibilities. Why not do them?"

For his show at the Tech Park, he has grouped his works into three categories: those that are a variation on layers, works that are influenced by Japanese art, and a category that plays on shapes of organisms.

His strokes can be bold, or delicate. Most contain cool pastels, which are his favorite colors.

He doesn't give his pieces names; only numbers — he wants the viewers to interpret the works, rather than giving them a name that might direct an interpretation.

His aim isn't to make a name for himself in the art world. It's just to create.

"I do them because they look beautiful to me," he says. "It gives me pleasure."

If you go

- What: "The Magical Abstract World of Henry Koffler."
- When: Through Oct. 31. Viewing is by appointment. Call 621-4088.
- Where: UA Tech Park, 9070 S. Rita Road, Building 9070.

- Cost: Free.
- Et cetera: Proceeds from the sale of Koffler's works, which range from $200 to $500, will benefit Arizona Center for Innovation.

See Koffler's works online

Images from Henry Koffler's show at the UA Tech Park are at azstarnet.com/gallery